

Georgia-Carolina Memorial Bridge  
Savannah River, State Highway 72  
Elberton vicinity  
Elbert County  
Georgia

HAER No. GA-38

HAER  
GA,  
53-ELBE.V,  
2 -

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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GEORGIA-CAROLINA MEMORIAL BRIDGE  
(Page 1)

HAER GA-38

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

GEORGIA-CAROLINA MEMORIAL BRIDGE

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Location: Across the Savannah River between Elbert County, Georgia, and Abbeville County, South Carolina Georgia and South Carolina State Highway 72. Elberton, GA vicinity.  
UTM: 17.348460.3770940  
Quad: Heardmont

Date of Construction: 1927

Present Owners: Georgia DOT, Atlanta, Georgia  
South Carolina DOT, Columbia, S.C.

Present Use: Vehicular bridge

Significance: The Georgia-Carolina Memorial Bridge is an 11-span reinforced concrete arch bridge crossing the Savannah River between Elbert County, Georgia, and Abbeville County, South Carolina. The bridge was dedicated on Armistice Day 1927. At the time of its construction it was one of the largest reinforced concrete bridges in the southeastern United States.

Historian: John P. Johnson, September 1980.

## THE GEORGIA-CAROLINA MEMORIAL BRIDGE

In November 1921, the Calhoun Highway Association requested the Georgia State Highway Department to conduct surveys of the Savannah River near Calhoun Falls, South Carolina, to determine a site for a bridge. In March 1925, R. E. Toms, District 8 Engineer of Georgia, approved the Burton's Ferry site just above the homestead of James Edward Calhoun at Millwood, South Carolina. This important bridge in the Calhoun Highway System was estimated to cost approximately \$200,000. The Federal Government committed \$100,000 and the States of Georgia and South Carolina each committed \$100,000. Elbert County, Georgia, and Abbeville County, South Carolina, each would contribute \$25,000 toward their State's obligation.<sup>1</sup>

In April 1925, Abbeville County voted for a \$25,000 bridge bond, and in August, Elbert County matched the sum. In June 1925, Elbert County Commissioners were assured by the State Highway Board that the Calhoun Highway would be funded from Johnstown, Georgia, to the bridge site on the Savannah River at Burton's Ferry. In August 1925, Searcy B. Slack offered two plans for the Burton's Ferry crossing, a steel deck truss bridge and a reinforced concrete arch bridge.<sup>2</sup>

In February 1926, Emmett M. Williams of Monroe, Georgia, secured the lowest bid for the concrete arch bridge at \$213,992. An unnamed bridge company from Greensboro, North Carolina, was the lowest bidder for the steel deck truss design. However, in spite of the higher cost, Abbeville County insisted on the elaborate concrete arch design. Ground was broken on March 23 by Mr. James Y. Swift of Elberton, as bridge workers were already erecting housing at the site.<sup>3</sup>

The American Legion Posts in both counties suggested the bridge be a memorial to the American soldiers who gave their lives during World War I. By September 1927, the bridge was being referred to as the Georgia-Carolina Memorial Bridge. The bridge was officially opened at a large dedication ceremony on Armistice Day 1927. Miss Ida Calhoun, a lineal descendant of John C. Calhoun, broke a bottle of ginger ale over the concrete banisters at the center of the bridge. The bridge was built at a cost of \$230,000 and was estimated to weigh 23,000,000<sup>4</sup> pounds. The work was completed October 27, 64 days ahead of schedule.

The present bridge structure is an 11-span reinforced concrete arch bridge crossing the Savannah River. Its symmetrical arches consist of two ribs and all have open spandrels. The approach girders are 48' long and the roadbed reaches a height of 50' above the river. The spans are 125' long and the road deck is 18' wide. The bridge is approximately 0.3 mile long. Two memorial tablets, originally bolted to the banisters, have been removed. With the construction of a new bridge nearby, the future of the memorial bridge is uncertain.

Footnotes:

1. Elberton Star, November 1, 1921; July 7, 1922.
2. Elberton Star, March 13, April 17, June 20, August 11, 1925.
3. Elberton Star, February 2, 1925; March 23, 1926.
4. Elberton Star, March 25, September 13, 1927; November 1, 8, 15, 1927.

See also engineering drawings on microfilm, Project FAP 447, Georgia Department of Transportation. Concrete Arch Bridge, 1927.  
(Photocopies not available)